



State of Connecticut
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Statement of Brian S. Becker
State Representative for the 19th Assembly District
before the
Committee on General Law
Connecticut General Assembly
March 8, 2011
in support of
HB 6447

An Act Concerning Retail Wine Sellers and Wine-Related Classes

Chairman Doyle, Chairman Taborsak, Ranking Member Witkos, Ranking Member Rebimbas, and the other distinguished members of the General Law Committee, thank you for taking the time to hear testimony on HB 6447, An Act Concerning Retail Wine Sellers and Wine-Related Classes.

I recently visited a constituent of mine, Greg Nemmergut, at his store, West Side Wines, in West Hartford Center, to discuss his opposition to Sunday sales. Our meeting took place in a small classroom in his store. Mr. Nemmergut told me he had built the classroom to hold wine education classes, for a fee, in response to requests from his customers.

I thought holding fee-based wine education classes was a great idea. However, Mr. Nemmergut told me that liquor control agents told him that he could not do it – that it was beyond the scope of his license. What a shame.

Here was a small businessman, listening to his customers and trying to accommodate their requests. Here was an entrepreneur trying to expand his business in difficult economic times and investing his own money to make it happen. Yet he could not.

I still think Mr. Nemmergut's idea is a great one, as do other liquor store owners inside and outside of my district. You will hear from some of them today, including Mr. Nemmergut, himself, Dave Leon from Super Cellars in Avon and Joe Schling from the Blue Heron in Glastonbury. Offering classes is a smart way for these small businesses to generate more revenue and educate their customers.

I think the idea becomes even more compelling should this legislature choose to allow Sunday sales of alcohol. Many liquor store owners fear that allowing Sunday sales will cost them revenue. Allowing fee-based wine education classes would give them an opportunity to realize a new revenue stream that could help offset any negative effect Sunday sales might have on their small businesses.

Please support this bill. Thank you.